

XMAS SHOPPING: YULE GET LOTS OF BARGAINS

CHRISTMAS presents will be as cheap this year as they were a decade ago.

A large selection of goods – including electrical, music and video products – are cheaper than this time last year thanks to competition among retailers.

But each gift will be 2% cheaper on

by SIMON WORTHINGTON

average – putting prices on a par with those back in 1994.

And with a host of bargains on offer, spending this Christmas is on track to break all records.

Consumers are set to part with £75.8 billion in the three months to Christmas. That's 3.9% up on the

same period last year. Higher interest rates mean shopkeepers are keeping a lid on price rises.

And shops are much better prepared for what are expected to be the "hot ticket" items, says a major annual report by analysts Verdict.

Last year, stores sold out of mobile camera phones because they underestimated how popular they would be. But with mobile phones already predicted to be this year's biggest seller, shops are well stocked in readiness.

Other factors which will

make it a cheaper Christmas include the fact that there is no major computer games console being launched this year.

Drive

It is anticipated existing consoles will be reduced in price to boost sales.

More shops will be offering "3 for 2" offers, with chains like Boots cutting profits to drive sales.

But a Switch/Maestro spending survey which

was also released yesterday claims average adult spending this year will actually fall.

Its poll claims that adults will spend an average of £813 each on Christmas, the lowest total since 1999.

The firm's chief executive Roger Alexander said: "Following five interest rate rises, consumers are going to be much more cautious this Christmas, spending £55 less overall than in 2003."



Kate so flashy!

BREAKFAST telly star Kate Garraway revealed she went commando at the National Television Awards last week.

GMTV host Kate, 36, above, said: "There's nothing worse than a visible panty line."

"It was a long dress and not too windy, so I think I got away with it."



Mum's Lil girl

ACTRESS Kate Beckinsale loves to kid around especially with daughter Lily. Kate, 31, joined in the games as her five-year-old played in a sandpit in Malibu. An onlooker said: "Kate looks a fun mum."

Picture: PACIFICCOASTNEWS.COM

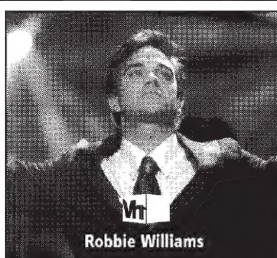
Hol trip is hell

A COACH trip to Edinburgh turned into a journey from hell when holidaymakers found their hotel was 130 miles away in ENGLAND.

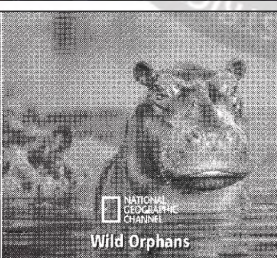
The tour operators said the nearest place they could find for the overnight stay was in Workington, Cumbria – on the west coast.

Passenger Mike Davies, 51, from Hull, said: "It was a nightmare from start to finish."

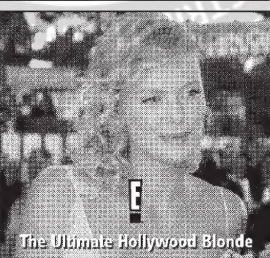
THE average price of a new home in the UK fell by 3.1% last month to £261,645. The fall means that prices are also 3.1% lower than they were this time last year – the first negative change since the boom began, a survey found.



Robbie Williams



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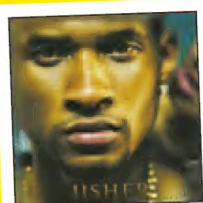
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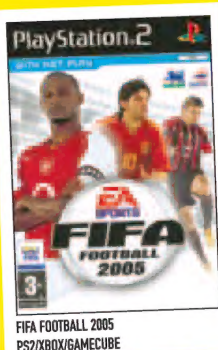


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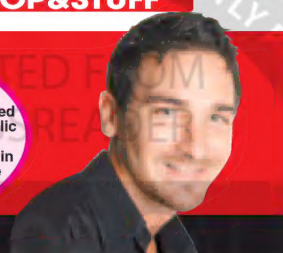
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DOES Louis Walsh want to be Britney Spears' new manager? I only ask as he seemed to be making his admiration for the US pop princess clear on The X Factor on Saturday night. Westlife boss Louis got his boyband G4 to do an inspired version of Baby One More Time, which swept up the public vote. Later he was sporting an "I love Britney" badge. Britney sacked her svengali of 10 years Larry Rudolph in July this year to take control of her own career. A source said later: "It was strange to see Louis being so supportive of Britney when both she and Westlife have their new albums out this week."



Lee: Come'n get me, Rob

CHEEKY BLUE GET SHIRTY



CHEEKY Blue boy Lee Ryan has declared his love for Robbie Williams by wearing a T-shirt with the singer's mug on his chest.

Lee wore his special tribute when Blue played London club night G-A-Y on Saturday.

It followed the Robster's comments that if he were gay he would fancy Lee, 21.

A source revealed: "Blue were all in high spirits. They are building up the promotion for their greatest hits album and were determined to put on a special show for the fans."

Last week the Daily Star reported how Robbie, 30, said in the gay mag that Lee would be his perfect fella if he battled for the other side.

He said: "They've all got their appeal. But if I put my gay man shoes on for a minute, Lee is your archetypal gay's bloke."

"He's like one of those adverts you get at the back of magazines, the ones with the guys in soccer strips you can phone up and listen to them having a w**k, apparently."

Drinks

"Lee's one of them. He is totally a gay phone-in ad."

Blue had a busy Saturday night with Duncan James, 25, hosting the National Lottery 10th birthday celebrations.

My source added: "By the time they got to G-A-Y all the Blue boys had enjoyed a few drinks."

"They didn't go on stage 'til 1.45am but they held it together and weren't drunk, just in a good mood."

Lee told me: "I read in the Daily Star what Robbie said about me and thought it'd be a right laugh to wear a Robbie T-shirt to G-A-Y to show that I'm a fan of his."

"I know that he's in town this week so thought I'd send him a message."

FAME GAME

ROBBIE has his chance to meet up with Lee and laugh about the situation when he rolls into town for the premiere of Bridget Jones: The Edge Of Reason tomorrow.

He's also scheduled the world premiere of his Christmas single, Misunderstood, which is taken from the movie soundtrack, at the UK Hall Of Fame bash on Thursday.

Madonna has confirmed she will pick up her induction into the Hall in person alongside other big names like U2.

The Rolling Stones have been invited, and with all four members in London it's likely they'll drop by the swanky new music ceremony at Hackney Empire.

G-A-Y OLD TIME: Lee and Blue having fun

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JOE MOTT'S hot

Edited by KIM DAWSON



Picture: BARRY CLACK

Hello hot lips!

PUCKER UP boys. With lips like these I can't imagine 411 beauty **Tisha Martin** has anything to cry over when it comes to getting attention from the opposite sex. The 411 girls got punters hot under the collar at Cardiff's Sparks In The Park firework bash with their new single, *Teardrops*, which is released next week.



Church mission

CHARLOTTE Church is so intent on trading in her classical past for pop success she's jetted off to America.

Over there she will work with **Destiny's Child** hitmaker **Dallas Austin**.

The hotshot producer, who worked his magic on **Beyoncé** and co's breakthrough record, *The Writing's On The Wall*, has agreed to help transform the Welsh teen diva.

Charlotte, 18, above, was sent to America after her initial attempts at ditching her past singing style were given the thumbs down by Sony.

Dallas, who has also worked with **Madonna** and **Janet Jackson**, is hooking up with the **Sugababes** for their next record.

And the fruits of his latest labour can be heard on **Duran Duran's** album *Astronaut*.

WESTLIFE WING IT

WESTLIFE forgot the words to their best-known song while playing Butlins at the weekend.

Maybe it was the embarrassment of treading the Red Coats stage in Minehead but when it came to belting out *Flying Without Wings* the Irish lads crashed and burned.

A source told me: "Westlife apologised to the crowd when they messed up the song as they couldn't remember the words. They clearly felt a bit silly and wanted to gloss over it. They pulled it all back with their Rat Pack covers – and at least it proved they were singing live."

TENORS CASH IN

SIMON Cowell's new act **Il Divo** are on course to have the fastest-selling album of the year.

Sebastien, Urs, Carlos and David have knocked **Robbie Williams** off the top of the album chart with their debut record.

The opera boys, who've been dubbed the phwoar tenors, sold 132,829 copies of their self-titled album, outselling Robbie by 33,000.

Cowell said: "I am quite simply thrilled. They are fantastic singers."



Picture: TIM MERRY

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DAILY STAR THE OFFICIAL

Sophie rips into Loos-er



SEXY Sophie Anderton has got her claws out for Rebecca Loos, saying she'd "tear into her" if she was pitted against her on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here! Model Sophie said Loos, who claims to have bedded David Beckham, was "sad and pathetic". Sophie, 27, added: "She's simply awful. I'd have to tell her what I think. I'd eat her alive, kill her - I really would. She reckons she's a celebrity and she's clearly not at all." The latest contestant to sign up was last night revealed to be soccer legend Paul Gascoigne, 37, after fellow Georgies Ant and Dec begged their former England hero to take part.

BRENDAN'S MAD RANTS TERRIFY ME

DANCING queen **Natasha Kaplinsky** has quick-stepped into action to stop the war being waged by former partner **Brendan Cole**.

The moody ballroom hunk has thrown tantrums because dance partner Sarah Manners is failing to match his high standards.

Sexy newsreader Natasha, 31, has had to make a series of comforting phone calls to counsel Sarah through the ordeal.

Casualty siren Sarah, 28, has been reduced to tears by Brendan, 28, during their rehearsals for

■ by KATIE BEGLE

BBC1's *Strictly Come Dancing*. She has now turned to Natasha - who won the first series with Brendan - for advice.

An insider said: "When Natasha first started dancing with him he made her cry. He is a hard taskmaster."

Perfect

"Brendan's a perfectionist. After winning it last year he wants everything to be perfect."

"He doesn't want anything to get in the way of him winning again."

Strictly groovy:
See **StarBets**

FRIENDS:
Natasha, left,
and Sarah



REALITY TV PAPER **OFFICIAL** REALITY TV PAPER

YOU CASHED IN ON OUR MISERY

by RICHARD WHITE
X FACTOR rejects 2 To Go blasted Louis Walsh last night after he had them booted off the show.

And they accused producers of cashing in on their misery by making them wait through a commercial break to learn their fate.

Emma Paine and Peter Jones, who is blind, were then kept waiting even longer as judge Louis deliberated over the crucial deciding vote between them and Voices With Soul.

Presenter Kate Thornton, watched by her showbiz pals Tamzin Outhwaite and Nicole Appleton, kept pushing him for a decision.

And Louis - who manages both acts - finally gave Emma and Peter the thumbs down.

But yesterday Peter, 24, said: "As soon as we realised it was us against Voices With Soul we knew we were going."

"But the situation at the end was just horrible. Louis had made his decision straight



CHEERIO: Emma and Peter of 2 To Go and right, judge Louis waves after show

away but instead we had to wait for 40 seconds before he would actually bring himself to say it was over for us."

Tears

Emma, 23, said she thought Louis had deliberately made them wait just to entertain the viewers.

She said: "I was standing

there for the longest 40 seconds of my life while he ummed and aahed when we all knew he had made a decision.

"It was really horrible and I hated it."

2 To Go's rendition of I've Had The Time Of My Life on Saturday's ITV1 show was rubbished by judge Simon Cowell, who compared it to

"something you would hear in a cocktail bar in Magaluf".

But the night was not a total disaster for Emma.

Her boyfriend of four years, Chris Friend, 31, a research chemist from their home town Nottingham, proposed to her backstage afterwards.

She said: "I was delighted and just burst into tears."



GIRLS' NIGHT OUT: Tamzin, presenter Kate and Nicole link up after show

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BACK STRAIN OF TV ADDICT KIDS



SLOBBING: Teen viewer

COUCH potato kids are paying the price - with a pain in the back.

Hours spent slobbering in front of TV and computer screens are giving them back problems, say health experts.

In a senior school of 1,000 pupils, at least 52 will be walking around with fractured spines.

Boys spend a whopping 41 hours a week watching TV or playing computers,

■ by KATIE SAMUEL

while girls spend 21 hours in front of the box, says a survey by the British Chiropractic Association.

But slouching for hours without moving is leading to muscles and bones being underused.

Strain

The TV addicts then put their bodies under extreme strain when they make a sudden movement, like carrying heavy school

bags, said back specialist Dr Chris Turner.

And trying to look cool at school makes things even worse, the doctor added.

Most kids sling their rucksack on one shoulder - and that puts uneven pressure on the spine.

Top doctor Scott Miller warned: "Bones are soft up to the age of 18.

"The discs in the spine are stronger than the bones, so they deform if you keep carrying weight on one side."

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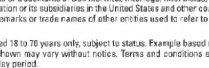
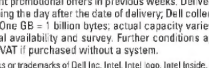
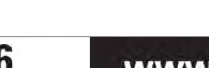
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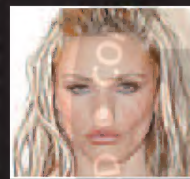
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STAR NEWS

Express Star Charts



BRIDE-TO-BE: Jordan

THEY all said it wouldn't last. But out-in-front model Jordan, who these days prefers to be known by her real name of Kate Price, has announced she's all set to marry her boyfriend Peter Andre - the pop star who fell for her hook, line and sinker in the Aussie jungle while playing I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here.

Our OK! Celebrity Chart is based on stars' coverage in Express newspapers - your Daily Star, our sister papers the Daily Express and Sunday Express - and OK!, Britain's best celebrity magazine. It's THE guide to who's hot and who's not that's got everyone talking.

TOP 40 ALBUMS



- (-) IL DIVO II Divo
- (1) GREATEST HITS Robbie Williams
- (-) AHA SHAKE HEARTBREAK Kings of Leon
- (-) SINGLES Travis
- (2) 10 YEARS OF HITS Ronan Keating
- (-) ALL THE BEST Tina Turner
- (-) NUMBER ONES Bee Gees
- (5) SCISSOR SISTERS Scissor Sisters
- (3) STARDUST - THE GREAT AMERICAN - VOL III Rod Stewart
- (-) LOVE SONGS Phil Collins
- (-) LIVE - A TICKET FOR EVERYONE Busted
- (4) SONGS ABOUT JANE Maroon 5
- (-) LIFEBLOOD Manic Street Preachers
- (9) AMERICAN IDIOT Green Day
- (-) THIS IS MUSIC Verve
- (6) BEST OF Def Leppard
- (13) FINAL STRAW Snow Patrol
- (10) AMORE MUSIC Russell Watson
- (-) ANDREA Andrea Bocelli
- (15) UNWRITTEN Natasha Bedingfield
- (16) HOPES AND FEARS Keane
- (14) CONFESSIONS Usher
- (11) THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION Olivia Newton-John
- (8) ONCE MORE WITH FEELING Placebo
- (26) SECOND NATURE Katherine Jenkins
- (12) WELCOME TO MY WORLD Daniel O'Donnell
- (7) SOMETHING'S GOING ON Cliff Richard
- (19) MIND BODY & SOUL Joss Stone
- (18) CALL OFF THE SEARCH Katie Melua
- (21) LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING - THE ESSENTIAL Michael Ball
- (-) SING THE SIXTIES Foster & Allen
- (11) GOLDDIGGAS HEADNODDERS & PHOLK SONGS Beautiful South
- (23) THE STORY SO FAR - THE VERY BEST OF Rod Stewart
- (31) ANASTACIA Anastacia
- (33) WHO KILLED THE ZUTONS Zutons
- (30) FRANZ FERDINAND Franz Ferdinand
- (22) AROUND THE SUN REM
- (-) LIVE LICKS Rolling Stones
- (-) JOJO Jojo
- (32) OUT OF NOTHING Embrace

THE OK! CELEBRITY CHART

- 1) **DAVID BECKHAM:** Real Madrid star David says he'll quit football in two years to move to Hollywood.
- 2) **LESLIE GRANTHAM:** The EastEnders star is axed from his role as Dirty Den.
- 3) **JORDAN:** Busty Jordan, aka Kate Price, reveals she's ready to marry her pop star boyfriend Peter Andre.
- 4) **KERRY MCFADDEN:** Kerry introduces her new boyfriend Dan Corsi to her parents in Warrington, Cheshire.
- 5) **JESSIE WALLACE:** The EastEnders actress gives birth to a daughter she calls Tallulah.
- 6) **BEYONCE KNOWLES:** The



DINNER DATE: Brian

singer joins her Destiny's Child band members Michelle Williams and Kelly Rowland to promote their album Destiny Fulfilled in London.

7) **CHRIS EVANS:** The media mogul has a string of dates with his new girlfriend Carly Ayres.

8) **STRICTLY COME DANCING:** Actress Jill Halfpenny is tipped to win the reality TV show.

9) **BRIAN MCFADDEN:** The solo singer enjoys dinner with Australian star Delta Goodrem.

10) **TRACY SHAW:** Pregnant actress Tracy admits alcohol nearly killed her.

TOP 40 SINGLES



- (-) JUST LOSE IT Eminem
- (-) LOSE MY BREATH Destiny's Child
- (-) MY PREROGATIVE Britney Spears
- (-) CAR WASH Christina Aguilera
- (-) CONFESSIONS PART II Usher
- (1) WONDERFUL Ja Rule ft R Kelly
- (-) THE WEEKEND Michael Gray
- (2) CALL ON ME Eric Prydz
- (-) DJ/STOP Jamella
- (5) MY NECK MY BACK (Lick It) Khia
- (11) MILLIONAIRE Kelis
- (3) NOTHING HURTS LIKE LOVE Daniel Bedingfield
- (14) STOLEN Jay Sean
- (-) ALL I WANT Wet Wet Wet
- (10) HAPPY PEOPLE R Kelly
- (8) I BELIEVE MY HEART Duncan James
- (11) PUMP IT UP Danzel
- (7) YOU WON'T FORGET ABOUT ME Dani Mingoie vs Flower Power
- (13) FLASHDANCE Deep Dish
- (-) ALL THAT I'M ALLOWED Elton John
- (-) WIND THE BOBBIN UP Bo Jangles
- (-) I PREDICT A RIOT Kaiser Chiefs
- (-) BACK FOR ME Candee Jay
- (15) ENJOY THE SILENCE 04 Depuch Mode
- (-) WHY DO I DO TYLER James
- (9) WHAT BECAME OF THE LIKELY LADS Libertines
- (-) THE END HAS NO END Strokes
- (23) PIECES OF ME Ashley Simpson
- (12) LOCK UP YA DAUGHTERS Noise Next Door
- (9) RADIO Robbie Williams
- (21) DO YOU KNOW (I GO CRAZY) Angel City
- (-) ROUND HERE George Michael
- (14) YOUR MOTHER'S GOT A PENIS Goldie Lookin' Chain
- (-) BALLA BABY Chingy
- (18) COME GET SOME Rooster
- (20) MORE MORE MORE Rachel Stevens
- (25) OPEN ARMS Tina Turner
- (19) FREAKIN' OUT Graham Coxon
- (28) WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF Lucie Silvas
- (35) MARY Scissor Sisters

Picture: DAVE BENETT



Geldof's girls so Lively...

BOB Geldof's girls turned out for the screening of the new Live Aid DVD last night. Fifi Trixibelle (left), 21, Peaches (right), 15, and 14-year-old Pixie were at the Kensington Odeon, London, for the launch party. There was another reason for Sir Bob to celebrate. Gordon Brown will refund VAT paid on the DVD sales and a remix CD of Do They Know It's Christmas? That's worth up to £4million for the charity.

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Barman charges

THREE teenagers have been charged with the murder of gay barman David Morley, above.

Mr Morley, 37, of London, died after being attacked in the city last Saturday. All three are due before magistrates in Camberwell today.

NEW CANS MAKE YOU THINK AS YOU DRINK



UNITS of alcohol are to be displayed on cans and bottles to make binge boozers think about how much they drink.

Men should knock back no more than 21 units per week and women just 14, according to official advice.

But a pint of Stella Artois or Kronenbourg contains three units – meaning fellas should have only

■ by TOM SAVAGE

seven pints a week. And women should consume only nine bottles of Smirnoff Ice or WKD per week as they contain one-and-a-half units each.

A Government source said last night: "More people know the number of units they can drink than know how much is in each pint or bottle."

"People are surprised when told how much alcohol there is in

certain drinks. It's a fairly straightforward step to say labelling should reflect the number of units in each drink."

He added: "We don't want to get accused of nannying the public."

Rowdy

"But if it stops people thinking they can drink 21 pints of Stella each week, as they wrongly believe it's one unit in one pint, then that's got to be a good thing."

"At the moment the cost to the

public in health terms, as well as the cost to taxpayers, is huge."

The plans come amid rising concern about levels of violence and rowdy behaviour associated with heavy drinking.

Ministers are also concerned at the rise in alcohol consumption by women – and hope telling them how much is in each bottle will help them control their drinking.

Latest figures show alcohol-related illnesses and injuries cost the NHS £1.7 billion each year.

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Picture: MARK CAMPBELL

Coleen a top draw

■ WAYNE Rooney's gorgeous girlfriend Coleen McLoughlin, 19, was dressed to impress yesterday for her first Manchester soccer derby.

■ Coleen wore a poncho to give Wayne, also 19, something to smile about even though United only drew 0-0 with City.

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CHARLIE CATCHPOLE

HE'S BRITAIN'S MOST SWITCHED-ON TELLY CRITIC



BOOT IN MOUTH AWARD...

TO ITV Sport's John Champion, who did some adding-up on his fingers during the Arsenal v Panathinaikos clash and declared: "Three points - the minimum expected from tonight's game, from an Arsenal perspective." And also, as it happens, the maximum.

The joke hasn't Dawned yet

WEEK four of **French and Saunders** (Friday, BBC1), and still the joke is that they can't think of any good sketches for their new series. Only this is not so much a joke, more of a mission statement. You can almost hear the tumbleweed blowing across the set. The first of many "too close to the truth to be funny" moments came when Dawn was stunned to learn that she and Jennifer would have to present their ideas to a panel of BBC bosses. She complained to producer Liza

Tarback: "Normally, the stuff we do is just fast-tracked automatically. Because, after all, we've been here for years, and the BBC do know us..." As if to ram the point home, the pair then found themselves vying for a prime-time BBC1 slot with a double act who really are This Year's Big Thing - **Little Britain**'s David Walliams and Matt Lucas. They played a pair of screaming queens (so, no typecasting, then) who had devised a game show called *Does Your Mother Know?*

Walliams explained: "Basically, it's who's gay, who's straight, who's bi, who's common knowledge, who's still in..." Lucas (in a bad wig and a pair of tinted specs that made him look uncannily like Elton John) said: "At the end of the show, we actually out someone. It's for their own good." "Fun for all the family!" trilled Walliams. Graham Norton's producer must be kicking himself for not thinking of that first. All that French and Saunders

could come up with was Shakespeare's King Lear, done like **Footballers' Wives** and starring Michelle Collins, Denise Van Outen, Amanda Holden and Brian Cox. Ruby Wax, who was the Controller of BBC1 (which would explain a lot), said she'd go for it, but only if Saunders were replaced by Zoe Lucker. She told them: "You two are nearly the Two Ronnies... there's a Saturday night graveyard slot that has your name on it." At this rate, there soon will be.

BACK in **Little Britain** (Monday, BBC3), which gets better and better, Darydd was complaining that he didn't land a part in the village amateur dramatic society's production of *Hamlet* because the organisers were "totally homophobic." Myfanwy asked him what audition speech he did. Darydd: "It's *Waiting Men* by the *Weather Girls*."

Prime time hit

IT seems reports of the death of family viewing were grossly exaggerated.

Take the runaway success of **Strictly Come Dancing** and **Ant And Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway**.

And who would ever have imagined that a show which began life on the children's channel CBBC, before graduating to Sunday teatime, would become the cornerstone of BBC1's Friday night winter schedule?

My Dad's The Prime Minister has been given a grown-up (but not too grown-up) makeover by writers Ian Hislop and Nick Newman of *Private Eye*.

The result is a weird hybrid - part playground humour straight out of the Beano, and part adult political satire that will go whooshing over the heads of most young viewers.

It's as if someone has mixed up the scripts for **Just William** and **Yes Minister**.

You could say the characters were cardboard, but they don't have that much depth.

Some of the gags are too childish to qualify as juvenile.

Premier Michael Phillips (**Cold Feet**'s Robert Bathurst) made inept attempts to get re-elected, juxtaposed with the parallel campaign in a mock school election by his 12-year-old son Dillon (Joe Prosser).

I kept thinking how much sharper and slicker it would have been on US TV - think *My Dad's The President*, by the writers of *Seinfeld* or *Frasier*.

And yet, and yet... I laughed out loud. Often. I just couldn't help myself.

It was a mess. It was stupendously silly. But it

was undeniably funny. Bathurst is quite brilliant, making the Prime Minister devious, cunning, slippery, but basically kind-hearted and well intentioned.

But slapstick, falling-down gags lurk around every corner.

He gathers his family for a photocall, leaning on a hastily-erected gate. Of course, the gate top-

ples over; they all fall flat on their faces (tee, hee!) and the press dub the incident Gategate (whoosh!).

On the campaign bus, the PM's weaselly aide Duncan Packer (Jasper Britton) tells him he won't be talking about any important issues that day, but about **EastEnders**.

He says this will show

that he's a man of the people, and hands him a plot summary for the last two weeks.

Phillips protests: "This is absurd!" Packer: "Don't blame me. I don't write the scripts."

That ticked all the boxes for me. Yes, Prime Minister. I cast my vote for a whopping great hit.



MY VOTE WINNER: Telly PM Robert Bathurst and his family

UNMISSABLE - Jon Ronson's **Crazy Rulers Of The World** (Sunday, C4). How could anyone resist a programme subtitled: *The Men Who Stare At Goats*?

This was a literally mind-boggling secret history of US military experiments with "thought death". It involved soldiers concentrating really hard in order to make a small animal's heart stop.

Ex-Special Forces member Guy Savelli, who now runs a dance and kung fu centre in Ohio, insisted he had a video of himself staring a goat to death - only he

HERE'S LOOKIN' AT YOU, KID...

couldn't find it right now.

Instead, he produced a tape in which he was seen eyeballing a hamster until it fainted and fell off its wheel.

The hamster eventually perked up and seemed none the worse for its ordeal. Close, Guy. But no cigar.

CHEEKY - a picture of Shane Richie as host of ITV's **Lucky Numbers** on the wall in the green room when the Barlows appeared on a naff quiz show in last night's **Coronation Street**.

Before he was dragged into taking part, Ken ranted: "If anything symbolises the utter bankruptcy of Western civilisation, it's a television quiz show!" Not a five-times-a-week soap opera, then.

THYME WE WERE TOLD ALL

AS a reward for growing some blooming healthy ratings, the green-fingered sleuths of **Rosemary And Thyme** (Friday, ITV1) were sent off to sunny Italy.

There they built a garden overlooking the sea and solved a couple of murders.

Felicity Kendal was filmed bend-

ing over quite a lot. By way of a change, she was also shown rolling out of bed and lying on her back while wriggling - unnecessarily slowly, I thought - into a pair of very tight jeans.

I really don't know why the producer bothers putting in shots like that.

Here's another thing about

Rosemary And Thyme that's been bothering me:

Every week, whether they're staying in a posh hotel, a vast country mansion or an enormous Italian villa, Laura and Rose always share a bedroom. You don't get Dalziel and Pascoe doing that.

Is there something going on that we should know about?

CLANGER OF THE WEEK

YOU might say mini-cab driver Tom Duggan went out of his way to shop mad Maya in **Coronation Street**.

The phone number on the side of his car began with 01634 - which is the area code for Medway in Kent.

Like John Ward of Chatham, you could win £50 by sending any gaffes you spot to TV Clangers, Daily Star, 10 Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6EN.

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EXCLUSIVE: FAME ACADEMY HUNK REVEALS

Lemar's Brit

by **SAM PARKER**

SINGER Lemar Obika is the Best of British – and that's official.

After pulling off that rare feat of emerging from a Reality TV show – the first series of Fame Academy in which he came third – and establishing himself as a credible artist, the talented north London lad has seen his career go from strength to strength.

And now Lemar can add a new string to his bow. He's the latest homegrown hunk to be chosen to front Burton's Best of British campaign.

"It's the first time I've ever modelled and it was really enjoyable," smiles Lemar, 26. "Obviously I've done photo-shoots for record covers and magazines but I've never actually taken part in a campaign."

"When they approached me, I checked out the clothes first and I was really pleased. It's exactly the sort of stuff I wear. A nice mix of smart and casual."

And now he's had his first foray into the world of fashion, is modelling a road he fancies travelling?

"You know, for me it's really all about music – that's my chosen path and always will be. But I love clothes as well, everyone likes to look good don't they? So it's nice to get the chance to do something like this."

"I tend to pick up clothes all over the place. Yeah, I'm now lucky enough to get my hands on lots of designer gear, but I still shop on the High Street too. I'm more into stuff I like than brands."

Plastered

Lemar is in good company. He joins the likes of Footballers' Wives favourites Gary Lucy and Cristian Solimeno, Blue pin-up Duncan James, presenter Vernon Kay and soccer stars Michael Owen, Joe Cole and James Beattie in flying the flag for Burton's.

However he admits worrying about how he will react when he sees himself plastered on massive billboards.

"I guess I won't know until I see one," he laughs. "But just the idea of seeing a huge version of myself beaming down seems a bit surreal."

"Mind you, I think it might be even stranger for my friends and family. Just driving along and then 'Wahay – don't I know him from somewhere?'"

But with a double platinum selling debut album and a Brit Award for Best Urban Act already under his belt, Lemar's family must be getting accustomed to their boy's success.

And life on planet Lemar is all go, with his new single If There's Any Justice and highly-anticipated second album Time To Grow hitting the shops later this month.

While he's clearly pleased that he's managed to carve out his own respected niche away from TV talent shows, Lemar is not going to go all snifty about his time on Fame Academy.

"I tried for eight years to get my music out there the conventional way and it didn't work," he says.

"I knocked on the record company doors, I recorded the demos, I did the gigs but nothing happened. So when Fame Academy came along, I went for it and it worked."

"It got my music out there, it got me heard by the right people, and I will always be very grateful."

"The thing is, the music business is so tough now. Often it's all about money and there are not many people willing to take a chance on new talent. It's a shame."

"At least when you come off a TV show there are a lot of people who already know who you are so they're more willing to take a gamble. That's just the way it is."

Not that Lemar sees his long struggle to the top as a waste. He says those years were part of a learning process which helped him maintain his own direction and ideas.

Deal

"When I signed my record deal with Sony, it was always about letting me keep my creative control."

"I didn't want the kind of deal where you're told what to do, what to record."

And the new album?

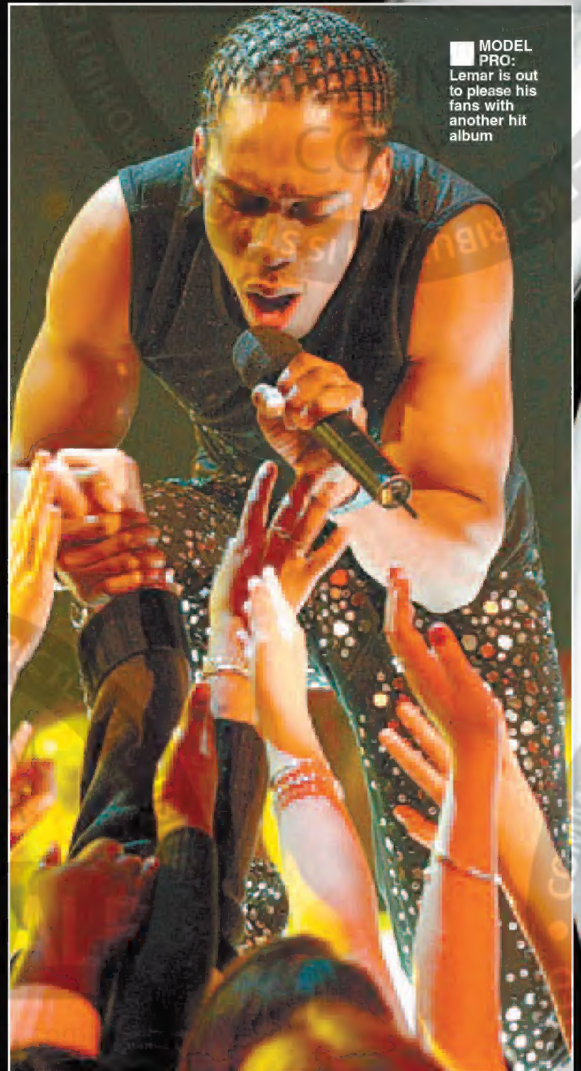
"It's a definite progression for me," he reckons.

"I've had the chance to work with so many fantastic producers."

"And I've time to make sure it's exactly how I want it."

His new single If There's Any Justice is released on November 15. The album, Time To Grow, is out at the end of the month.

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HOT: Gary Lucy, left, and Cristian Solimeno



COOL: Blue's Duncan James

WHY HE'S SUITED TO THE CELEBRITY LIFE-STYLE

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PERSON

FRONT MAN:
Lemar is the new face of Burton's fashion campaign



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PLEA: Ex-smoker Reid

Ciggie U-turn in pubs

by TOM SAVAGE

SMOKING will NOT be banned in English pubs after all.

Ministers last night backtracked on controversial plans to ban smoking in all workplaces – including pubs – after they caused a public outcry.

But lighting up will still be banned in offices, restaurants, shopping centres and train stations.

Health Secretary Dr John Reid – a former heavy smoker – said he wanted to see everyone follow his lead and give up.

Quit

But he added: "The state cannot make the decision to quit for you."

Last night the British Beer and Pub Association welcomed the climbdown after arguing only 20% of drinkers backed the plans.

Spokesman Mark Hastings said: "We believe in freedom of choice."

But pubs in Wales and Scotland will still see smoking banned under plans proposed by their own assemblies.

THE world's fastest sports car has gone on sale in the UK – for £700,000. The replica Le Mans-winning Porsche 962 has a top speed of 252mph and reaches 60mph in 2.5 seconds.

FUEL BOOZE PERIL

SHOPKEEPER ifthikbar Malik was fined £2,000 for selling bottles labelled vodka which contained poisonous fuel in Bristol.

BRITISH BAREWAYS

Fury over airport's naked x-rays



Picture: ANDY BUTTERTON

Busted are a real turn on

POP heart-throbs Busted switched on London's Christmas lights last night. The band lit up Regent Street's "incredible" display in front of thousands of screaming fans. James (left), Charlie and Matt (right) played live before flicking the switch. Organisers claim the lights are the most innovative ever.

by KATIE BEGLEY

A NEW airport security device reveals the naked truth about passengers and gives security staff an eyeful.

An X-ray machine, designed to spot hidden explosives or weapons, produces "naked" pictures of passengers.

But the device, on trial at Heathrow airport, has angered travellers who say it's embarrassing and doesn't leave much to the imagination.

American authorities are refusing to use the body scanner until it is modified to "mask" passengers' modesty.

But Britain's aviation bosses say if it can cope with large numbers, improve detection rates and is accepted by the public, it will be installed in every UK airport.

Search

At Heathrow, passengers are selected at random and asked to step into the scanner which looks like a grey filing cabinet.

Those who refuse are subjected to a hand search.

Security officials claim it's a more effective way of spotting potential terrorists because it highlights plastic explosives and ceramic knives, which normal metal detectors would miss.

The images that are taken can be checked and immediately deleted.

Experts say the new scanner could replace hand searches.

But passengers who have gone through it were shocked at how revealing the images are.

Gary Cook, 40, from Dorset, said: "I felt really embarrassed."

REF SENDS CROWD OFF

A REFEREE abandoned a football game after sending off the crowd.

Aggressive parents disrupted a match between Malvern Town and Hadley Rangers U13s.

And Malcolm Murray, 57, a ref in Worcestershire's Mercian League, said: "In the 50 years I've been in football I've never known such badly behaved parents."

"They had to be taught a lesson."

DISP CHKD

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